

# Country of the Week: Burundi

Burundi is a cultural mosaic based on local tradition, agricultural influence, and strong community connections.

Literature captures the country's history, and oral traditions depict life lessons through storytelling, poetry, and song. As a landlocked country, agriculture is an important industry, and the nation produces primary exports of coffee and tea. Cultural heritage bonds communities tightly, and traditions such as drumming are frequently performed at celebrations and family gatherings.

The YALI Network celebrates Burundi and its wonderful members, who continue to improve and better their communities as well as Africa at large. As we feature powerful member stories about entrepreneurial leadership and environmental advocacy, we invite you to be a positive force in your local community, and as we approach Burundi's Independence Day, take a moment to reflect on how positive change starts at an individual level.

Join Burundi's amazing Network members and bring impact to your own country by exploring the [YALI Network Online Courses](#) and by visiting the [YALI Network Facebook page](#).

Patrick Bizozza believes that business and entrepreneurship matter most in his community.



As an active YALI Network member, Patrick founded an organization called the Youth Initiative for Development to engage his community in entrepreneurial activities. "We focus on leadership, economic empowerment, education, youth, women empowerment, and health departments," he explains. In May, Patrick prepared a youth workshop to combat the systemic issues of poverty, where he shared small business training with his friends and local neighbors.

Inspired by the [YALI Network Online Courses](#), Patrick feels encouraged to better himself as well as his country. The Network "[opened his] thoughts," in addition to "help[ing] many people" discover new ways of thinking and approaching problems. Patrick trusts that over time, education and access to resources will eliminate ignorance and prevent common societal mistakes.

Join Patrick and members like him by [signing up for the YALI Network](#). You'll receive email updates, opportunities to collaborate with other young leaders, and access to helpful products and programs such as [YALI Network Online Courses](#) and [#YALILearns events](#)!

Bienvenu Irakoze is a climate change educator and environmental advocate.



After completing the YALI Network Online Course and receiving his certificate in [Understanding Climate Change](#), Bienvenu organizes many #YALILearns events in his community. "We promote ... ecological sanitation, ... [and] educate the rural population on the importance of ... [environmental protection]," he says.

In addition, Bienvenu's events spread awareness about climate change among university students and local leaders in Burundi. In an effort to reduce charcoal consumption, he shares healthier and more sustainable ways for urban populations to produce local cuisines.

Bienvenu continues to passionately work as an environmental leader in Burundi, starting a local non-

governmental organization (NGO) called Action to protect the Environment for sustainable Development (AED).

Is climate change an important issue to you and your community? Find out how to get involved by liking the [YALI Network Facebook page](#), and access free online trainings, virtual events, and more by [visiting the website](#).


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## Man Up to Stop Violence Against Women: Burundi

*“Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread violations of human rights. It can include physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse and cuts across boundaries of age, race, culture, wealth and geography.”*

— Man Up Campaign

Thierry Kajeneza grew up witnessing women and girls being raped, forced into prostitution and sent out alone to collect water and firewood and to look for food.

Thierry Kajeneza, front center, and a  colleague tell rural women in Burundi about their rights.

“I saw how women were not invited like men to speak out about their problems and about what they could contribute to the construction of Burundi” after a long civil war, Kajeneza, a 35-year-old human rights activist and YALI Network member, recalls.

That impression pushed Kajeneza and a colleague to establish [ICIRORE C’AMAHORO](#) in 2007. The Ngozi province-based group advocates for human rights, especially for women and girls. It wants to help young people avoid the mistakes of previous generations and learn to become leaders.

ICIRORE C’AMAHORO, which means “mirror of peace” in Kirundi, reaches out to young women and men to help spread its messages to the wider public. It runs youth clubs in schools throughout the country and started a youth camp. It organizes gatherings that give young men and women opportunities to talk about gender issues. And it encourages women to form support networks and learn financial skills.

The organization’s strategy includes finding opportunities in the community where husbands and wives can work together to make decisions, then discuss why each decision was made. That encourages “a safe environment for women to express themselves and allows both husbands and wives to recognize the power of working together ... in the workplace, at home and in the

community,” Kajeneza says.

Kajeneza notes that Burundi’s national and local governments have “responded positively” to ICIRORE’s work. Local authorities help inspire residents to attend ICIRORE’s meetings and training sessions. The national government gave ICIRORE the land on which it is constructing offices.

The international community also has responded. In 2010, the civil rights advocate was invited to the Man Up Young Leaders Summit in Johannesburg. A collaboration of the Clinton Global Initiative and Vital Voices Global Partnership, the [Man Up](#) campaign motivates youth to help stop violence against women and girls and advance gender equality.

Kajeneza follows the YALI Network on Facebook and says he likes “knowing other young people who are involved in many domains of leadership.” He advises members to use social media to share information about what they are doing to end violence against women.

“This issue of gender violence will be solved if we all stand together. ... The world will become a village where men and women will live in harmony,” Kajeneza says.

Take your pledge today for how you will help end violence against women and girls in your communities at [yali.state.gov/4her](http://yali.state.gov/4her).

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